

Barnwell Road FAQs

What is the situation on Barnwell Road? Why are we talking about this?

Barnwell Road is a 2.5-mile, two-lane collector roadway that has several safety issues, such as narrow lanes and shoulders, substandard sight distances at many intersections, motorists exceeding the speed limit, and a lack of pedestrian access (no sidewalks or trails) along more than one-half of the corridor.

The lanes are narrow — 9 feet wide instead of the standard 11 feet. The curves of the road and steep terrain next to the road make it difficult for motorists on side streets to see oncoming traffic. Drivers routinely exceed the 40 mph speed limit. Traffic studies have found 20 people a day drive in excess of 70 mph. Bicyclists and pedestrians are at risk because the road has few sidewalks and no bike lanes.

It is in the public interest to address these issues.

In the interim, the City Council directed the Public Works Department to trim back vegetation in the right-of-way to improve sight-distance at specific intersections. The department also added flashing radar signs at Barnwell Road and Niblick Drive, and built several asphalt pads to accommodate police vehicles to monitor motorists' speed.

To secure public input, the City conducted two Public Information Open House meetings and conducted a hard-copy and online survey that received 639 responses. [[See results](#)]

Why can't we leave Barnwell Road as it is?

It is the public interest to address roadway conditions that may pose safety problems.

How many accidents have there been? How many injuries?

Since 2010, Johns Creek Police have recorded 146 accidents on Barnwell Road with 16 accidents resulting in people being transported to a hospital. Forty accidents involved vehicles hitting trees or deer. Thirty involved accidents in which the side of the vehicle was damaged, such as T-bone collisions. There have been no fatalities in that time.

What are the options for Barnwell Road?

The City Council, with public input has decided what type of roadway Barnwell should be. It is currently a "collector road." An alternative was considered to make Barnwell Road an "arterial road."

Collector roads are usually two lanes, handle low to moderate traffic, and move vehicles from local streets to arterial roads. Arterial roads are usually four lanes and serve as high-capacity urban roads that move traffic to freeways.

Three collector options and one arterial option were considered. Based on feedback from the public, the City Council has rejected the arterial option.

Collector Option 1:

- Widen lanes from 9 to 11 feet.
- Add roundabouts at Niblick Drive, Glen Ferry Drive and Rivermont Parkway. After receiving public comment, roundabouts at Barnwell Elementary School and Old Southwick Pass were removed.
- Add left-turn lanes onto Sandy Lane Drive, Olde Clubs Drive, Old Southwick Pass, North Peak Drive, and Barnwell Elementary School.
- Build a 10-foot-wide pedestrian trail on the western side of Barnwell Road from Holcomb Bridge Road to Barnwell Elementary School.

Collector Option 2

- Replaces the roundabouts with center left-turn lanes.
- Build a 10-foot-wide pedestrian trail on the western side of Barnwell Road from Holcomb Bridge Road to Barnwell Elementary School.

Collector Option 3

- Includes medians with breaks at key intersections.
- Build a 10-foot-wide pedestrian trail on the western side of Barnwell Road from Holcomb Bridge Road to Barnwell Elementary School.

Can you solve the problem by just trimming back the vegetation?

The City is cutting vegetation in the public right-of-way. However, at some intersections the terrain creates sight-distance problems for motorists attempting to enter Barnwell Road. Trimming vegetation would be an incomplete solution; it does not address other safety issues, such as narrow lanes and speeding. The City is also adding flashing signals on Niblick Drive to alert motorists of northbound traffic on Barnwell Road.

If speeding and safety are problems, why don't you install traffic signals?

The Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices (MUTCD), issued by the Federal Highway Administration, establishes standards for traffic signals, such as vehicle counts in all directions, pedestrian counts, proximity to other traffic signals or proximity to schools. None of the intersections on Barnwell Road would meet MUTCD standards for a standard traffic signal.

Why are roundabouts an option?

Roundabouts provide a safer intersection by slowing traffic, and by allowing traffic to flow continuously – unlike traffic signals. They enable motorists exiting neighborhoods to slip into the flow of traffic. Accidents tend to be less severe rear-end and sideswipes instead of T-bone collisions common to traditional intersections.

Roundabouts provide pedestrians a safe place to cross the road.

Why not just reduce the speed limit?

The City can change the speed limit; however, the Georgia Department of Transportation (GDOT) approves the permit that allows police to use radar and lasers to

enforce the speed limit. GDOT would be unlikely to reduce the speed limit on Barnwell Road out of concern of creating a speed trap. Without the GDOT permit, enforcing the speed limit would be much more difficult. Additionally, the roadway design doesn't discourage speeding, so artificially creating a lower speed limit won't alter driver behavior without targeted physical improvements to the roadway.

Why not increase traffic enforcement on Barnwell Road to control the speeding?

Several asphalt pads to accommodate police vehicles have been constructed to enhance traffic enforcement. Police vehicles will be stationed on Barnwell Road as demands and resources allow. Intermittent enforcement alone won't significantly impact driver behavior. A combination of enforcement and physical improvements to the roadway will help to slow the speeds on Barnwell.